



## Office of the Governor

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### News release

Office of Governor Christine Gregoire

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – Sept. 8, 2005; 5:15 p.m.**

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## Washington State -- Hurricane Katrina Update

CAMP MURRAY, WASH. — Gov. Christine Gregoire said today the current information from the Federal Emergency Management Agency is that Washington state may receive displaced people from the Hurricane Katrina disaster area sometime after September 14<sup>th</sup>. She noted that date is not firm, however, and that the state will receive daily updates on hurricane evacuee travel dates and numbers. The governor said Operation Evergreen planners are nearing final decisions on where Katrina guests will arrive and where a welcome center will be located for initial housing.

Also today, Gov. Gregoire appointed Kurt Hardin of the Washington Emergency Management Division (EMD) as the State Coordinating Officer to oversee aid programs that are part of the national emergency response to Hurricane Katrina. The appointment came after Gregoire received notification late Wednesday that Washington state is included in the National Disaster Declaration.

“I am pleased that it looks like there may be a way for our state to assist a number of evacuees,” said Gov. Gregoire. “I have great confidence in Kurt and the leadership he will provide in this effort.”

Hardin, the Mitigation, Response and Recovery Unit Manager, has been with EMD since 1996. His substantial emergency management experience includes work on recovery efforts for the 2001 Nisqually Earthquake.

Hardin will work with John Pennington, Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Region X director since 2001, who was appointed as Federal Coordinating Officer, to coordinate the state’s Katrina response.

As of 3 p.m. today, the American Red Cross reported a preliminary count of 56 cases of individuals or families from the Gulf Coast area asking for assistance from their local chapters in Washington State. All of the state’s chapters are busy processing cases of evacuees asking for assistance.

All evacuees who have come to Washington on their own to stay with friends and family should register with FEMA by calling 1-800-621-FEMA (3362) or by logging on to [www.fema.gov](http://www.fema.gov) in order to receive FEMA assistance. Washington state has also established a disaster assistance help line to assist evacuees in obtaining disaster benefits available from the federal government; the telephone number is 1-800-688-3469.

Approximately 90 members of the Washington Army and Air National Guard are now on the ground in New Orleans assisting the Louisiana National Guard to coordinate air traffic over the three-state area devastated by the hurricane. The 66<sup>th</sup> Aviation Brigade’s “Task Force Falcon” was flown into Naval Air Station New Orleans, which is being used as a staging base. The guardsmen were flown to Louisiana on

KC-135 tankers, a dual-use aircraft that can be configured to transport troops as well as serve as a tanker.

People are encouraged to make cash donations to Washington Cares, a fund established by the governor in partnership with Washington Mutual Bank. Donations can be made at any Washington Mutual branch around the state, and will be given to the Red Cross. People who want to donate time, goods or services may call the state's Operation Evergreen hotline at 1-800-941-2930.

Operation Evergreen is an effort of state, local and federal officials along with community organizations to help people who have been displaced by Hurricane Katrina. As of 5 p.m. Wednesday, the donation line had received almost 400 calls from citizens offering to donate goods and services.

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